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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 2nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 4 October 2004, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Kyaw Tint Swe ..... (Myanmar)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda Item 20: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (A/59/23)

Agenda item 79: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (A/59/23, chaps. VII and XII, and A/59/71)

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Agenda item 81: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/59/23, chaps. VI and VII, and A/59/64)

Agenda item 82: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/59/74)

1. **The Chairman** recalled that decolonization was an area where the Organization had been very successful. In fact, since the founding of the United Nations, the inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories had been reduced from 750 million — or a third of the world's population — to fewer than 2 million, thanks in particular to the efforts of the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

2. The Special Committee held annual sessions devoted to developments in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and held hearings of Territorial representatives and petitioners. It organized visiting missions and seminars, formulated proposals and carried out the activities mandated by the General Assembly in the context of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Nevertheless, despite the emergence of more than 100 countries as sovereign and independent States, the task of the United Nations was not done, for there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories on the list. It was important to strengthen the spirit of cooperation among all parties involved, especially between the administering Powers and the Special Committee. The report of the Special Committee for 2004 (A/59/23) and the proposals it contained had been drawn up pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/111.

3. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking as Rapporteur of the Special Committee on Decolonization, introduced document A/59/23. Chapters I and II provided a general description of the Special Committee's current and future work. Chapters III to XI gave detailed information on the Committee's activities with respect to the items on its agenda. Chapter XII contained the recommendations of the Committee, in the form of draft resolutions.

4. The work done by the Special Committee in 2004 had been guided by the goals and the Plan of Action of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2001-2010). The Committee had focused essentially on developments in the 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories and, during both its regular session and the Pacific regional seminar on advancing the decolonization process in the Pacific region held in Madang, Papua New Guinea, in May 2004, it had benefited from the participation of representatives from the Non-Self-Governing Territories, of some administering Powers and of non-governmental organizations and experts. Underscoring the important role played by the administering Powers in the decolonization process, the Special Committee welcomed New Zealand's cooperation on the subject of Tokelau and hoped that its working relationship with the United Kingdom and the United States would lead to the decolonization of the Territories still under their administration.

5. The visiting missions were a valuable means of ascertaining that the aspirations of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were being taken into account. The Pacific regional seminar had been an opportunity to focus on the situation of the Territories in that region, using Tokelau as a case study. Initial contacts had been made concerning the possibility of holding the 2005 regional seminar in Bermuda.

6. During its 2004 session, the Special Committee, besides considering all items on its agenda, had taken up the questions dealt with in the draft resolutions set out in chapter XII of its report, the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), the question of Gibraltar and the question of Western Sahara.

7. **Mr. Aisi** (Papua New Guinea), Chairman of the Special Committee, recalled the main thrust of the Special Committee's work. Even in the fourth year of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories. Since the Special Committee's task had not been completed, it was continuing under Article 73 *e* of the Charter to review information provided by the administering Powers and was addressing the concerns expressed by the representatives of the Territories, petitioners and non-governmental organizations.

8. Many States Members of the United Nations owed their membership to the decolonization process and more than 80 Territories had gained their independence since the founding of the Organization. In order to speed up the process, the Special Committee organized regional seminars, held alternately in the Caribbean and the Pacific regions, where the majority of Non-Self-Governing Territories were situated. Those seminars afforded it an opportunity to monitor the development of political and socio-economic conditions in the Territories and to apprise the participants of its work and its desire to develop decolonization plans and work programmes together with the administering Powers.

9. The deliberations of the 2004 regional seminar, held in Papua New Guinea, had focused mainly on the Pacific region, and in particular on the Territory of Tokelau, concerning which attention should be drawn to the cooperation between New Zealand and the representatives of Tokelau. In 2003, Tokelau's General Fono (Council) had decided to explore with New Zealand the option of self-government in free association. A workshop of the Special Constitutional Committee to be held shortly in Tokelau would give further consideration to that question.

10. At its 2004 session, the Special Committee had adopted the recommendations and conclusions of the regional seminar, as well as one decision and 10 resolutions, including one on Puerto Rico, adopted unanimously. With regard to international assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the Special Committee had highlighted the need for joint efforts by the Economic and Social Council and the Special Committee itself. There were plans for a visiting mission to Bermuda, where the 2005 regional seminar might be held.

General discussion

11. **Mr. Duarte** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that one of the main aims of the United Nations was to promote the right of peoples to self-determination, an area in which the Organization had achieved one of its greatest successes. The milestones along the road to decolonization had been the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the creation in 1961 of the Special Committee, whose efforts, particularly in compliance with General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV), had enabled many Territories to gain independence. While the political map of the world had been entirely transformed, the goal of total eradication of colonialism was yet to be achieved. It was with that goal in view that the General Assembly had proclaimed the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2001-2010).

12. The Rio Group once more urged the administering Powers to take the steps needed for the decolonization of the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories, with due regard for each one's specific characteristics. The Group encouraged the Special Committee to continue its activities, including the annual review of the political and socio-economic situation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the holding of regional seminars, the visiting missions and the submission of recommendations to the General Assembly, and declared itself in favour of the adoption of the Special Committee's report (A/59/23) by the General Assembly. It was important for the Special Committee's recommendations to be followed up, especially by the administering Powers and the States concerned, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1514 (XV).

13. The Argentine and British Governments must urgently resume negotiations and endeavour to settle the dispute concerning the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and the adjacent maritime zones, in accordance with the pertinent resolutions and declarations of the General Assembly, the Special Committee and the Organization of American States. The Rio Group took note of the important contribution made by the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to the deliberations of the regional seminar organized by the Special Committee in 2004 and endorsed the ensuing conclusions and recommendations. Noting that the small island territories of the Caribbean and the Pacific constituted

the majority of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, he said that the Group would pursue measures for boosting their economic growth and putting an end to their dependence. It called on the international community to contribute to the settlement of those Territories' political, economic, social and environmental problems.

14. The Rio Group reaffirmed the responsibility of the United Nations to ensure that the Saharawi people exercised their right to self-determination. The Group supported the initiatives taken by the Organization to find a just, mutually acceptable and lasting settlement, in particular the peace plan for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara (S/2003/565, annex II). In that connection, he reminded the interested parties of the provisions of Security Council resolutions 1495 (2004) and 1541 (2004).

15. **Mr. Loizaga** (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the countries of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) and Associated States (Bolivia and Chile), associated those countries with the statement of the Rio Group. Although much progress had been achieved since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), the Special Committee still had 16 issues on its agenda. The countries of MERCOSUR and Associated States encouraged the Special Committee's efforts and took note of its report (A/59/23). They unreservedly supported the resolution on the question of the Malvinas Islands, approved by the Special Committee (A/59/23, chap. XI).

16. In the case of the dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime areas, the bilateral relations between the two countries and the provisional cooperation agreements they had concluded on practical matters in the South Atlantic should facilitate the resumption of negotiations on the substantive issue. In the declarations on the Malvinas Islands adopted by their Presidents on 25 June 1996 and 15 June 1999, the MERCOSUR countries and Associate countries had expressed their determination to support the Argentine Republic in the exercise of its legitimate rights.

17. **Mr. Lopez** (Cuba) deplored the way in which the universality of the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination was being crudely manipulated by applying criteria such as geographic distance, isolation, sparse population or size of territory. Certain administering Powers refused to propose definitive solutions to the colonial regime under which they were maintaining the Non-Self-Governing Territories on the misleading pretext that, being unable to exist as a viable independent society, the inhabitants preferred the status of their territory to remain unchanged.

18. While praising the rigour and perseverance displayed in the rationalization of the Special Committee's work, his delegation considered that its efforts and good intentions alone were insufficient and needed to be supplemented by viable, respectful official relations with certain administering Powers which wished to obtain the removal of their colonial Territories from the list without fully informing the inhabitants of their various options concerning self-determination, and also the respective consequences.

19. Countries could be removed from the list only when a decolonization process worthy of that name had allowed the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to have all the guarantees and all the facts that would allow them to reach a balanced, transparent and thoughtful decision. When a decolonization process was undertaken, the Member States should discuss in the Fourth Committee the application of the mandate entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly concerning the implementation of that crucial task.

20. His delegation stressed the importance of visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. They allowed not only collection of first-hand information on the living conditions and situation in the Territories, but also dissemination of information on the different options open to the populations for exercising their right to self-determination. The Special Committee's useful visit to Tokelau two years previously had marked an important stage in cooperation between the administering Powers, the Territory's local authorities and the United Nations. His delegation again wished to underscore the spirit of openness and cooperation that the authorities of New Zealand, the administering Power, continued to display towards the Special Committee by holding an extensive and respectful dialogue with it, which could set an example for other administering Powers to abandon their preconceptions and their ideas lacking any historic vision and cooperate fully with the Special Committee.

21. His delegation was extremely concerned about the overexploitation and looting of the land and maritime resources of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and the transformation of those Territories into dumping grounds for toxic waste. Such practices were flagrant violations of the spirit and letter of General Assembly resolution 2621 (XXV); they should be condemned and cease immediately.

22. While there were still Non-Self-Governing Territories and while countries persisted in acting as if colonialism was a secondary issue, a relic of the past rather than a scourge that unfortunately persisted in the twenty-first century, the question of decolonization should continue to be one of the main concerns of the United Nations.

23. His delegation stressed the importance of the regional seminars. The Special Committee should continue to organize such events in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and their results should be disseminated not only on the decolonization web site but also by Member States' media as well as being relayed by academics to other forums. Cuba continued to be concerned about the limited number of scholarships and professional training possibilities offered to youths from Non-Self-Governing Territories and it encouraged the wealthier and more developed Member States to discharge that debt towards the inhabitants of the Territories, reversing the current negative trend.

24. His delegation welcomed the adoption of several resolutions recognizing the inalienable right to self-determination and independence of the Puerto Rican people, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1514 (XV). It was also pleased that the resolution submitted by Cuba in June 2004 and adopted by the Special Committee without a vote had been maintained. The withdrawal of the United States Navy from Vieques Island had been greeted as an undeniable victory for the Puerto Rican people and the international solidarity movement supporting their struggle. His delegation welcomed the closure of the United States naval base at Roosevelt Roads. However, questions related to the decontamination and cleaning of the area and the return of the firing range to the local authorities of Vieques remained to be resolved. His delegation wished to reaffirm its historic commitment to the self-determination and independence of Puerto Rico, which was fiercely defending and preserving its identity as a Latin American and Caribbean country in the spirit of the struggle led by Simón Bolívar, José Martí and many others.

25. The stalemate in the self-determination process in Western Sahara was extremely worrying; in that complex issue, decolonization and foreign occupation were converging to hinder the establishment of lasting peace in the region. His delegation gave its ongoing, unconditional support for the Saharawi people's struggle against colonizers and foreign Powers. The United Nations should display courage and firmness in applying decisions designed to settle the question once and for all, while respecting the principles of international law and the Charter, so that the Saharawi people could exercise its fundamental and inalienable rights to self-determination and independence.

26. His delegation also staunchly supported the Argentine Republic's legitimate rights in the dispute concerning sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands and urged the parties to consolidate dialogue and cooperation in the quest for a just, peaceful and honourable solution to the conflict. The administering Power of Guam should likewise cooperate fully in endeavours to secure respect for the inalienable rights and legitimate interests of the Territory's inhabitants.

27. The General Assembly must take the lead in championing the inalienable rights of all peoples throughout the world, for it was the largest and most democratic body of the Organization, where Members could on an equal footing discuss problems inimical to the interests of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories, which were still prey to various forms of colonial exploitation. All Member States should strive resolutely to make colonialism no more than a painful memory in humanity's history.

28. **Mr. Toro Jiménez** (Venezuela) said that the Bolivarian Republic fully endorsed the Rio Group's statement presented by Brazil, as pro tempore secretariat of that Group. Venezuela was experiencing a peaceful, democratic process of self-determination when, for the first time in 200 years, the Venezuelan people itself was the master of its own destiny and the country's main political protagonist.

29. As a token of its solidarity with the other peoples of the world who were struggling against all kinds of colonialism, neo-colonialism or domination, his Government wished to reiterate its unfailing support for the Saharawi people's legitimate aspirations to self-

determination and respect for its sovereignty. It was therefore to be hoped that, in pursuance of the pertinent resolutions and decisions of United Nations organs and in keeping with the Charter and international law, a peaceful process would be launched forthwith to enable the Saharawi people to express its opinion in a referendum leading rapidly to independence for Western Sahara and its incorporation in the international community as a sovereign State.

30. His Government reiterated its support for the Argentine Republic's legitimate rights in the dispute concerning sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands and for peoples' right to self-determination, including that of Puerto Rico, a Latin American nation.

31. **Mr. McIvor** (New Zealand) said that the previous 12 months had been marked by considerable activity in Tokelau and New Zealand. On the political front, Tokelau and New Zealand had signed an important document entitled "Joint Statement on Principles of Partnership" in November 2003, in the presence of New Zealand's Governor-General. That document set out in writing for the first time both partner countries' rights and obligations and it buttressed the constitutional and political development of Tokelau.

32. In June 2004, the Administrator had formally transferred his powers to the three village councils of Tokelau which, in turn, had sub-delegated responsibility to the General Fono in specified national matters. A reworking of the public services around that new political structure was almost complete. The mechanism made the three villages central to Tokelau's governmental system and reasserted the three village councils' traditional authority, thereby giving substance to the concept of the "Modern House of Tokelau".

33. In October 2003, Tokelau's General Fono had decided to explore the option of self-government in free association with New Zealand, following consultations with the three villages and on the basis of a recommendation from the Special Constitutional Committee. That decision had been welcomed by the Prime Minister of New Zealand during her visit to Tokelau, when she had assured the latter of New Zealand's friendship and support as it moved towards that new status. A number of arrangements were being put in place in response to that decision and Tokelau's Executive Council would be visiting New Zealand in November to hold discussions with Tokelauan communities in New Zealand and talks with the New Zealand Government. In October 2003, the General Fono had also taken a number of important decisions on Tokelau's Constitution, the role and functioning of the General Fono, Tokelau's judicial system and the observance of international human rights covenants.

34. After the report of the Commission of Enquiry had been adopted at the beginning of the year, Tokelau's public services had also been restructured with a view to improving standards in key sectors and ensuring that each village council was able to operate its own public services. On the economic front, Tokelau had assumed full responsibility for managing its own budget. In July, Tokelau and New Zealand had signed a three-year economic assistance agreement aimed at substantially boosting allocations for shipping, education and health. The sum earmarked for the current financial year was $NZ 9.5 million and increases were programmed for the following two years.

35. His delegation was pleased to announce that the formal Deed for Tokelau's International Trust Fund would be signed during a visit by Tokelau's Executive Council to New Zealand. Contributions by the two countries stood at $NZ 7.5 million. The Special Committee had already drawn the international community's attention to the Trust Fund, which would provide an important means for regional and international bodies and other countries to help Tokelau, once it was self-governing, to overcome the challenges of distance, smallness and lack of resources.

36. It was pleasing to note that Tokelau continued to play a full role in regional affairs. In addition to managing its relationships with its Pacific neighbours, it had participated actively in a number of regional groupings, activities and organizations. New Zealand continued to work on strengthening the structures and systems on which Tokelau depended for its economic and technical support. A team of five specialist advisers was helping Tokelau in the areas of health, education, public sector management, legislation and financial management.

37. His delegation wished to pay a tribute to the contribution made by United Nations agencies to the development of Tokelau, especially the United Nations Development Programme, which had shown considerable sensitivity towards Tokelau's particular circumstances and needs. Tokelau looked forward to the day when other international bodies and other

members of the international community would follow that example, thus enabling Tokelau to take its place among the self-governing and independent nations of the Pacific.

38. Lastly, his delegation was confident that the political situation in Tokelau, which had developed along the lines that had been predicted, would continue to evolve over the coming months, as Tokelau continued to move, in close partnership with New Zealand and the United Nations, towards self-determination.

39. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the United Nations continued to play a valid role in the process of decolonization: over 80 million people had exercised their right to self-determination, which showed that the process could be considered a success. Self-determination would not, however, be fully achieved if the aspirations of more than two million people living in the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were not satisfied before the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The Special Committee should therefore continue to fulfil its responsibilities and untiringly pursue its efforts to bring about a speedy end to colonialism.

40. During the first half of the Decade, only one Non-Self-Governing Territory had been removed from the United Nations list of such Territories. The first half of the Second Decade was drawing to an end, yet 16 Territories, with two million inhabitants, were still awaiting United Nations assistance in determining their political, cultural and economic future. It was to be hoped that the long-standing dream of self-determination of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories would be realized and that the international community would not need to proclaim another decade. The Special Committee should thus continue its work in a dynamic and innovative manner in order duly to attain the objectives of the Second Decade.

41. In that regard, his delegation considered that the highest priority should be given to the following seven factors, which, in its view, were of vital importance: (i) dissemination of relevant information among the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories in respect of their right to self-determination, which would be a significant step on the path to decolonization; (ii) dispatch of periodic visiting missions, which would be an excellent means of collecting first-hand information on conditions in the Territories and on the wishes and aspirations of the people concerning their future status; (iii) greater participation by the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the work of relevant meetings and conferences, so that they could benefit from United Nations activities; (iv) constructive dialogue between the administering Powers and the Non-Self-Governing Territories so as to expedite the implementation of the goals of the Second Decade; (v) cooperation between the Special Committee and the administering Powers in developing a programme of work for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, which would be an important element in the process of decolonization; (vi) development of a mechanism to review systematically, on an annual basis, the implementation of specific recommendations on decolonization; and (vii) regional seminars that could enable the Special Committee to focus on matters of concern to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, especially when held in such Territories, and allow the peoples of such Territories to air their views among the broader international community.

42. Lastly, his delegation wished to reiterate that the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the Non-Self-Governing Territories was a prerequisite for the realization of their right to self-determination and that the administering Powers had a solemn obligation to promote such advancement. Governments and the relevant United Nations bodies should work together and take all the necessary measures to fulfil their responsibilities.

43. **Mr. Shiweva** (Namibia) said that the agenda item under discussion had been before the Committee since 1961 and, despite the appeal to Member States contained in General Assembly resolution 55/146, a number of Territories continued to languish under foreign domination. The situation could not be allowed to continue. Member States should redouble their efforts to implement the Plan of Action for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The international community as a whole should ensure that the populations concerned attained their freedom and independence. His delegation commended the Special Committee for its tireless efforts to implement the relevant General Assembly resolutions and urged the administering Powers to cooperate with the Special Committee and participate in its work in order to ensure that the aspirations of the

peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were fully realized.

44. The process of decolonization, which was one of the main objectives of the United Nations, should be speeded up. His delegation would not waver until the peoples of such Territories, who looked to the international community for assistance and support in their quest to realize their aspirations, could free themselves from the bondage of colonialism and foreign domination.

45. The oppressed people of Western Sahara were still denied their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. The international community should ensure that a free and fair referendum was held in the Territory. His delegation urged the Government of Morocco, which to date had not accepted the Peace Plan, to cooperate fully with the United Nations on holding the referendum.

46. The Middle East continued to be caught up in a spiral of violence that caused untold suffering and destruction of human life and property. The illegal occupation imposed by Israel on the Palestinian people had lasted too long. The Palestinian people had suffered enough and deserved the right to establish an independent and sovereign State in which they could live in peace and social justice.

47. **Mr. Nguyen Duy Chien** (Viet Nam) said that, over the past 42 years, the decolonization process had brought freedom to more than 80 million people in 60 former Non-Self-Governing Territories and increased the total membership of the United Nations to 191. Such remarkable achievements continued to encourage all peace-loving peoples to redouble their efforts to ensure that colonialism was banished from modern society. It must, however, be said that the goals for decolonization set out in the 1960 Declaration were far from being attained, for there remained 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The situation required new efforts on the part of the international community.

48. His delegation reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of such Territories to self-determination and independence in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), regardless of the size, geographical location, population or natural resources of the Territories in question. It fully subscribed to the fundamental position of the Non-Aligned Movement that the principle of self-determination with regard to the remaining Territories within the framework of the Programme of Action should be realized in accordance with the wishes of the peoples concerned in a manner consistent with General Assembly resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations.

49. Viet Nam supported the activities of United Nations bodies, especially the Special Committee on Decolonization, which conducted annual examinations of the political, economic and social situation in each Territory, organized workshops in the Asia and Pacific region, sent missions to the field and made recommendations to the General Assembly. The Special Committee could not carry out its mandate properly unless it enjoyed the cooperation of the administering Powers, which should, inter alia, facilitate United Nations visiting missions to the Territories.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.